

N^o 10
Great Knowledge, no Excuse for Neg-
lecting to hear Sermons.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
ARCH-DEACON'S
Visitation,

At AILESBUURY,
OCTOBER the 15th. 1708.

Published at the Request of the Clergy.

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Wicar of Wendover, and Chaplain to the Right
Honourable the Earl of Wharton.

London, Printed by W. B. for James Knapton, at the
Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1709.



12.1.18.

2 PET. I. 12.

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these Things, though you know them, and be establish'd in the present Truth.

TIS too common for Men who have no taste in things Divine and Spiritual, to forsake the Publick Worship of God, upon pretence of their great Knowledge and Attainments. "They are so perfectly skilled in all the great and necessary Truths of Religion, that no Body is capable of telling them more than they know already. Could they learn any thing new and curious from the Pulpit, they would be the first that should come to Church; but to have their Ears punished with Old and Thread-bare Stuff for a long Hour together, this is too great Penance, and they desire to be excus'd.

This Pretence is the more dangerous as it meets with a natural Vanity and Self-opinion in every Man, more or less, that gives it a ready Entertainment and draws him easily into it.

My design in this Discourse is to shew the Weakness and Insufficiency of it to justify Men in this Practice, in Order, by the Grace of God, to reclaim them from the same, and to vindicate the sacred Institution of Preaching the

Word of God, together with the Reputation of the Ministers of it, from that Contempt which it casts upon them : For if this be allowed to be a good excuse, the multitude of People, who are indifferent to Religion, and who think well of themselves, will be ready to lay hold of it ; Christian Assemblies will grow very thin ; and God's Ordinance, as well as our Office and Labours, will soon be of little Regard or Use.

For this purpose, I have chosen those Words I have read to you out of St. Peter ; wherein after he had in the foregoing Verses exhorted them to the diligent Practice of all those Virtues and Graces that were necessary to make their *Calling and Election sure*, he tells them *That he would not be negligent to put them always in remembrance of those things, though they knew them before and were established in the present Truth.* Though they well understood how necessary the Practice of these things was in order to secure the great design of their Christian Calling, which was the Salvation of their Souls ; yet he judg'd it convenient to take such opportunities to put them in mind thereof for fear lest they should grow supine and remiss in their Duty ; and therefore he adds the next Verse, *Yea, I think it meet, so long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance.* And we find St. Paul writing much after the same manner in Rom. 15. He tells 'em, *He was perswaded they were filled with Goodness, and full of all Knowledge* verse 14. *Nevertheless, says he, verse 15*

have written the more boldly unto you, in some
 sort, as putting you in mind, because of the
 Grace that is given to me of God. i. e. I have
 taken this Liberty to remind you of those
 things you knew before, by virtue of my
 Ministerial Office.

Did these two great Apostles do an absurd
 thing in writing to these Christians those
 things which they knew before? Or would
 they have been excuseable in not reading the
 same upon that pretence? If neither, then there
 is no Ground for objecting against our Preach-
 ing, that we Preach things that are already
 known; nor will this justify those who with-
 draw themselves from our Ministry upon this
 account. But this is what I hope more fully
 to shew in the sequel of my Discourse.

The Sum of what I have to say in answer
 to this Pretence, or Excuse, will fall under
 these three Heads.

1st. That there is Reason to fear, that of-
 tentimes it is a meer Pretence, and no more.

2^{dly}. That it is most commonly false in
 fact; and that generally speaking, we are ca-
 pable of informing People in some useful
 Truths of Religion.

3^{dly}. That if it were true, yet it would not
 justify them in their absenting.

After which I shall Address my self in a few
 Practical things to Hearers and Preachers.

1st. There is Reason to fear, that oftentimes
 it is a meer Pretence, and no more; and that
 many People make use of it, not because they
 think it true, but because they think it Plausi-
 ble,

ble, and not so easily answer'd as some other Excuses are.

'Tis very common for Men to give false Reasons for their Practices, when they are ashamed or afraid to own the true: They will take every specious Colour, and every deceitful Light in order to hide those guilty Designs, which will not bear to be expos'd. When *Samuel* accus'd *Saul* of disobeying the positive Command of God, in not destroying all the Effect of the *Amalekites*, how readily does he reply *Sam. 15.* that *the best of the Sheep and the Oxen were spar'd that they might be sacrific'd to the Lord?* This seem'd very plausible but it was not the true Reason: He spar'd them for his own use, and only disguis'd his ambitious intent with the false colour of Piety and Devotion.

Much after this manner do those Men pervert, who withdraw themselves from the publick Worship of God, upon pretence that they cannot be inform'd and edify'd by it; but this is only a pretence, and they know it to be so: The True Reason, if they would deal honestly, would be the same with that of the wicked Jews related by the Prophet *Malachi* *Mal. 1.* who said, *Behold what a weariness is it to me.* 'Tis their averseness and disinclination to the Worship of God, and their ill relish of a good Discourse, not the apprehension that it cannot edifie them, that is the true Cause of their dissenting, if they would speak plain. But because the owning of this Truth would be much to their disadvantage, they choose to make

in their Refuge, and to screen their Reputation behind a most false and idle Pretence.

I am afraid this would appear too plainly, if we were to observe the general course of such Mens Lives; but especially if we could see what they are doing at home, whilst other people are at Church. I am afraid we should find them either Sleeping or Drinking, or Gaming, or doing something still worse and more impatient of the Light than all this, and that those Words of the Apostle would be too true of them, *That it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.* Ephes.

12. If these things are true (and there have been too many Instances to prove them so,) 'tis certain that the pretence which I am supposing, is false. Such Men do not absent from the Worship of God because they think that they cannot be inform'd and made wiser, but because they will not be reform'd and made better.

Of the two, it looks much more likely that they are afraid least they should know too much, and are willing to continue ignorant of their Duty, that so their Consciences may give them less trouble for the neglect of it. Every wicked Man desires of all things to be easy and unmolested in his vicious Course, and therefore shuts the Curtains about his Mind, and does all he can to keep it Dark and Dead-light within him, for fear his Conscience should awake and take him to task. Thus our Saviour tells us, *For every one that doth Evil, hateth he*

Light, neither cometh to the Light, least Deeds should be reprov'd. Luk. 3. 21.

So that the Pretence of too much Knowledge, is so far from being true, that on the contrary they are only afraid lest they should have too much : They desire to continue ignorant as they are ; and therefore shun the means of Instruction.

But *2dly*, I answer, That the thing pretended is most commonly false in fact ; and then generally speaking, we are able to instruct People in some useful Truths of Religion. I think we cannot justly incur the censure of Vanity and Ostentation in pretending to this, especially when we are constrain'd to do it in answer to an Objection that would render our Ministry in great measure useless and insignificant. For Divinity is our professed Study and Business. We are born with such Faculties and Understandings as other Men are, and we turn them chiefly to this kind of Knowledge ; and we have peculiar advantages of Education to improve us in the same : and if after all we should not understand it something better than other People, it would be very strange, and I am sure we should be very much to blame. However we do not reckon it Immodesty in any Man to pretend to be better skilled than others in his own Art and Profession ; for it is expected that he should be so.

Besides that the Character which the Holy Scriptures give of us will bear us out, for thus we read, *That the Priests Lips should keep Knowledge, and that the People should*

Mal. 2. 7.

show

ould seek the Law at his Mouth ; for he is the
 messenger of the Lord of Hosts : That he should
 be a Pastor, to feed the People with Know-
 ledge and Understanding, and a Workman
 that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing
 the Word of Truth .And I hope that, ge-
 nerally speaking, we do not sink below this Cha-
 racter ; if we do (especially in this Age of
 Learning,) I am sure we have great reason to
 be ashamed.

Jer. 3.
15.

2 Tim.
2. 15.

Now since this is our Character, and since we
 have such Opportunities for making it good,
 it would be a very blameable Modesty in us,
 for fear of being thought vain and opinio-
 nated, we should let this Objection against our
 preaching pass for true ; for so we should be
 necessary to the betraying of our Master's
 Cause, and to the Contempt of his Ordinances
 and Worship.

But I cannot so easily acquit from this Cen-
 sure, those who make this Objection ; since Di-
 vinity is not their professed Study and Business :
 indeed I am afraid 'tis much less so than it
 ought to be. Let indifferent People judge if
 this be not Pride and Vanity. Certain I am,
 that it would be thought so in us, should we
 pretend to understand Physick as well as the
 Physicians, or Law as well as the Lawyers.

I grant that Religion is every Man's Profes-
 sion and Business, not only as to the Practise,
 but also as to a competent Skill in the Princi-
 ples and Doctrines of it. And I could wish,
 with Moses, That *all the Lords People were Pro-
 phets* ; that every private Christian knew as
 much

much and more than we can teach them. But forasmuch as Divinity is a very wide and deep Study, and the Holy Scriptures an immense Fund, a bottomless Mine of Truth, that few have sufficient leisure and assistance to search narrowly into; Therefore has God ordain'd and set a-part certain Orders of Men whose business it is to work in this rich Mine and distribute the precious Treasure among the rest of Mankind, *to feed them with Knowledge and Understanding.* So that it is no wonder if they should know more than others whose Office it is to teach and instruct others.

After all; I will not deny that some particular Persons among the Laity, who having with great Piety and Industry, search into the Depths of Divine Knowledge, may have as much Understanding as their Teachers: But I dare say they are not amongst the Objectors I have now do with; *They know their Duty too well, and are too wise and too good to forsake our Assemblies upon a such Pretence.* Which leads me to the

3^d Thing; Namely, That, though this Pretence were true, and we could tell Men nothing but what they knew before, yet this would not justify their withdrawing themselves from the Preaching of God's Holy Word.

I might offer several Things to make it appear.

As that it is an open Contempt of an Ordinance that is unquestionably of Divine Institution; and which is moreover so essential to Religion, as to be the great Instrument

keep

ing up the Life and Power, and very Face
 it in the World, and of saving Mens Souls.
 That further, it is a very high Indignity
 er'd to God Almighty and our Blessed Sa-
 our, in whose Name we come, and whose
 ambassadours (as unworthy as we are) yet
 have the Honour to be stil'd in the Holy
 scriptures : And that it is so taken, we learn
 from our Saviour's own Mouth, where at
 sending out the Seventy to preach the
 Gospel, he tells them, *He that heareth you, hear-*
me, and he despiseth you, despiseth me, and
that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me,
 Mt. 10. 16. Shall God Almighty send us
 with a very kind and gracious Message to mi-
 serable Sinners ? and shall they refuse us a
 hearing, and tells us that they know before-
 hand *all* that we have to say ? Good God !
 what Rudeness and Indignity is this to him
 that sent us ?

I might also take notice, That under this
 pretense they absent from the *Prayers* of the
 Church, as well as from our *Preaching*. If
 they have no business with *Us*, yet 'tis presu-
 med that they have some with *God Almighty* :
 Must He lose his Tribute of Publick Prayer and
 Worship ? Must the Church lose the Assistance
 and Reinforcement of their Prayer and Devoti-
 on ? And will they themselves lose those Bless-
 ings for their Souls and Bodies which the Church
 is ready to joyn with them in asking ; and all
 because they have no Opinion of *Preaching* ?
 Certainly if a Sermon can do them no good,
 at least it can do them no harm ; but the
 neglect

neglect of their Devotion will do them a great deal of harm, and they will find it so at some time or other.

To this I might add the *III Example* which such People set to their Neighbours, and the bad Influence it may have upon them. If they are so wise as to need no Instructions, other People are not, who yet will be apt to tread in their Steps. For Men of such great Knowledge and Attainments, as they pretend to be, have commonly a great many Admirers and Followers that implicitly imitate their Actions, especially when they are of the side of their own natural Lusts and Inclinations.

These Considerations are of themselves sufficient to shew the Unjustifiableness of the Pretense for not attending upon the Preaching of God's Word.

To which I will subjoyn that Apostolic Injunction; And *let us consider one another, and so we will be provoked unto Love, and to good Works; forsaking the assembling of our selves together in the manner of some is,* Heb. 10. 24.

But because I would not only silence the Pretense, but convince People that it is not only unreasonable and groundless; I will offer the four Things following to be considered.

1. That it is of no less Advantage to reach to Mens Minds those wholesome Truths which they have forgotten, or neglected, than to teach them new ones. What is a Man wiser for that Knowledge which he has lost, or what is he the better for that which he gains, if he never attends to it? Indeed,

the Man tells us, that Truth is the most precious of all Treasures : But when it is not contemplated on, when it is not drawn into use, 'tis such another Treasure as that which the Miser hoards up ; and by that means renders it useless to himself and every else. And, as *the Rust of his hoarded Gold and Silver shall witness* Jam. 5. 3. *against him, and eat his Flesh as it were Fire at the last Day*, so will such rusty and neglected knowledge rise up in Judgment against Men, and enflame their last Reckoning.

And yet we may sadly observe, That this is the Treatment which too many People give to the most Sacred Truths : Tell Men of any thing that may serve their worldly Interests or minister to their Lusts, and they will be sure to remember it, and keep it uppermost in their thoughts ; They will catch at the least Hint, and turn and wind it every way, till they have made the most of it ; whilst the most excellent Truths of Religion are flung like useless Lumber into some dark Corner of their minds, never to see the Light or be thought of more.

And indeed this is the true Reason why Men grow no wiser under the most excellent means of Knowledge ; and no better under the most advantageous Helps for Piety and Goodness : For Inadvertency is the natural course to Oblivion, and Oblivion differs only in the Name from Ignorance, excepting the greater Guilt of it.

Most

Most of the Wickedness in the World committed for want of thinking. Wicked Men know very well that Virtue is better in self, and better for them than Vice ; That the former is perfective of their Natures, and their true Happiness, whilst the latter debars their Souls, and will draw upon them utter Ruin and Destruction : But they will not think and consider of this, and for this Reason do they continue wicked. So that nothing can be of greater Service to them than to be excited to consider and attend to those Things which they know already, that so they may be the better for their Knowledge ; or otherwise they will fare much the worse for it.

'Tis because Men are thus apt to forget, and backwards to think and reflect upon what they know, that St. Paul advises the Hebrews *give the more diligent heed*, i. e. often to consider and attend to those Truths which they hear lest at any time they should let them slip, Heb. 1. And St. Peter gives this, as the Design of his two Epistles, to the converted Jews, in 2 Epist. c. 3. v. 1. It was to stir up their Minds by way of Remembrance, that they might be mindful of the Words which were spoken by the Holy Prophets, and of the Commandments of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour : And sincere Minds, who Love the Truth, yet need stirring up to attend to the same, lest they should forget it ; much more do they need it, who are as willing to forget as to retain it.

Now this single Consideration, as it makes
 our Duty to inculcate the same Truths upon
 Hearers, so does it shew the Weakness and
 Fickleness of the fore-mentioned Pretense
 not attending upon our Ministry : For if
 known Truths will naturally die out of Mens
 Minds, and their Knowledge relapse again in-
 to Ignorance for want of frequent Attention
 and Reflection upon the same ; and if there be
 so much danger of this even in the best of
 Men, by reason of their natural Weakness, or
 Temptations, or Interruptions by Secular Busi-
 nesses, then it must be of great use to all Men
 to be often reminded of the great Truths of
 Religion, the better to fix them in their Me-
 mories, and impress them upon their Hearts,
 and enforce them upon their Practice.

Secondly. Those Truths which Men do already
 know and attend to, may possibly be known
 more perfectly. 'Tis a general Fate upon us,
 in this mortal Life, to *know but in part*, and
 to *see as through a Glass darkly* ; so that there
 is always room for Men to improve in their
 Knowledge : And there is no Man so tran-
 scendantly skill'd in any Science, but another
 Man may be able to inform him in some
 Things which he did not know before ; espe-
 cially is this true, in so various and extensive a
 Science as that of Divinity. There will be some
 Darkness, Confusedness and Perplexity in ma-
 ny of his Conceptions about it, that want
 clearing ; something that lies cross and unto-
 ward in his Scheme, that needs to be reconci-
 led and adjusted : And perhaps another Man
 may

may have fallen upon a happier way of thinking upon those Points, and may be able to set them in a better Light and Order, and give him satisfaction.

It often happens that good Ideas are wild and entangled in a Man's Brain, that he is hamper'd and perplexed to range them in Order and Method and Connexion, and for to fit down unsatisfied : Under this Circumstance some Body or other may help him to the right end of the Thread ; after which the Clue of Knowledge will run off easily to him.

Now this is one Advantage which he may hope to reap from his Attendance upon the Preaching of God's Holy Word. Sometimes or other he may hear things better prov'd, better divided, distinguish'd and explain'd, the Relations, Connexions and Dependencies, may be placed in a clearer View and bring more Light and Evidence to his knowledge.

this means he will grow in Grace, and in Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
2 Pet. 3. 18.

3. That Knowledge which Men have, may be rendred more useful and practicable : 'tis a very great mistake, (and the Pretence I am exposing is chiefly built upon it) to think that the only End of Preaching is to inform the Ignorant ; for this is not so much as the first End of it. The first and great End of Preaching is, to reclaim wicked Men from a sinful to a religious Course of Life, in order to save their Souls. Knowledge is indeed a necessary Step towards this ; and if Men would

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ays act according to the best of their Know-
 ge, we should have nothing to do but just to
 fill their Heads with good Notions : But we
 observe the most excellent Truths to lye
 in Mens Heads without operating upon their
 parts or Lives. 'Tis therefore not the least part
 our Business to render that Knowledge which
 we have, more useful and serviceable to them;
 to perswade them to put it in practise.

Now this may be effected various ways; but
 principally by working upon their Affections and
 Passions, which are the most forcible Springs of
 Operation and Action in Humane Nature, as it
 stands at present : And we have the most pow-
 erful Motives to work upon these : For we set
 before them, and Death, Heaven and Hell, before Men,
beseech them by the Mercys of the Living God,
 we *perswade them* by the Terroures of the
 same; we make Descriptions and Representati-
 ons of the most moving Things imaginable, to
 stir up their Hopes and their Fears; we draw Scenes
 of exquisite Bliss and exquisite Misery that are
 without end, before their Eyes : and what Con-
 siderations can perswade Men to live up to their
 Knowledge, if these will not ?

Besides, that in attending upon the Preach-
 ing of Gods Word, their Knowledge may be
 strengthened and rendered more practicable by some
 of the Directions, some serious Exhortations, and
 some seasonable and prudent Reproofs.

Or it may be reviv'd in their minds at a more
 favourable and lucky Conjuncture ; something
 may be happily said in a Sermon, or in a happy
 conjuncture, that may lay hold of a Man and do
 more good than a Thousand good things

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delivered

delivered in another Manner or at another Time.

There are different ways of access into different Mens Breasts; and those are more open and practicable at certain seasons than at others. One Discourse shall take them in a better Manner and Temper, in a kinder and more candid Disposition to receive the Truth in the Word of it: And so of our side, one Preacher, or Sermon shall suit some Palates, and procure your and Attention beyond others that are themselves no less excellent.

There is an Instance in holy Writ which will serve to illustrate this; and it is that

Nathan's recovering David to Repentance after his Adultery with Bathsheba and his horrid Murder of Uriah, in order to make her his own Wife. This the Prophet performed by framing a very artful Fable, that presented the Cruelty of the Fact; *David* thinking himself to be concern'd, was so enraged at such a barbarous piece of Oppression, and decreed certain Death to the Author of it: This was all that *Nathan* wanted; for immediately upon it he opens the Moral, and shews him that he had condemned himself out of his own Mouth; upon which he presently confessed *have sinned against the Lord.* *David* knew better as well as *Nathan* could tell him, how heinous the Sins of Adultery and Murder were, and how much it was his Duty to repent of the same; but yet it was this happy way of representing his Crimes, and of reproving him, that touched him to the Quick, and recovered him out of Hardness and Stupidity. Perhaps a Thousand

God Admonitions from another hand, or admitt'd in another manner, would have failed Success.

Lastly, The Grace of God's Holy Spirit, which ordinarily attends the Preaching of the Gospel, to render it efficacious upon Mens Hearts and Lives, and to produce those good effects which I have been mentioning upon every teachable and well-dispos'd Hearer, is a consideration sufficient of it self to shew how much it is Mens Wisdom, as well as Duty, to attend constantly upon the same; and to condemn the Folly and impiety of absenting from it upon any pretence whatsoever.

This was very extraordinary in the beginning of Christianity, when three Thousand Persons were converted from their Infidelity and wicked Courses by one Sermon: And Acts 2. 41.

though the Assistances of the Holy Ghost and the Success of Preaching, did not keep up to the Pitch in the following Times, yet it continued very great; insomuch that the *Roman Empire* was soon over-spread with Christians, and those for the most part good and virtuous Men; *So rapidly did the Word of God grow and prevail*, the means of Preaching accompanied with his Holy Spirit.

'Tis sad indeed to observe how unsuccessful we are in these degenerate Times; but yet that little good which is done is principally done by the same Means: 'Tis the Spirit of God, accompanying this his own Institution, that turns those few that are turn'd, from the Wickedness of their ways to a virtuous Course of Life.

So that if Men have any good Intentions growing better, any desires of being happy the next World, and of being fitted and prepared for it in this, they must attend upon the Means which God has instituted, and which will bless for that purpose ; they must, as *born Babes desire*, &c. They must receive *meekness the ingrafted Word*, which is able to *live* their Souls ; they must hear, that their Souls *live*.

I hope these Considerations may satisfy every unprejudiced Man, that the Pretence before mentioned, for not coming to the Publick Worship of God, is very frivolous and groundless ; since there is no Man so consummate wise and good, but he may receive so much Benefit by attending upon our Ministry, as may it both his Duty and Interest to do it.

The Improvement of this Discourse concerns both those that hear and those that preach the Word of God.

It instructs the former to be diligent and constant in their Attendance upon the Ministry that Word, which by the Grace of God accompanying it, is the great Instrument of enlightning and convincing and turning them from the Errour of their ways, of edifying and building them up in Faith and Holiness, and saving their Souls.

Be your Attainments in Knowledge and virtue never so great, yet you cannot answer the customary Neglect in this matter ; neither to God, because it is his Ordinance ; nor to the Church, because we come in his Name, and with his Message ; nor to your selves, because the

om for you to grow, get more in Grace, and
be wiser and better than you are.

Christianity is a progressive State, that has no
ounds or Limits assigned to it ; and the great
uthor and Finisher of it, that he might screw
our Virtue still higher and higher, commands
to be *Perfect as our Father, which is in Hea-*
is Perfect, Matt. 5. 48. The word of God,
hich we Preach, is the Means appointed for
is End ; and out of it we are to distribute
at to the *Strong*, as well as *Milk* to *Babes*,
at so the most advanced Christians may be still
wing up into him in all things who is the Head.
hef. 4. 16.

You are therefore greatly wanting to your
wn Souls, when you are sparing and remiss in
ur attendance. Every opportunity that you
e might have made some considerable Ac-
ssion to your Knowledge and Virtue ; and de-
nd upon it, that just so much shall be dimi-
h'd from your future Reward. I will leave
th you that Beatitude pronounced by Wis-
m, *Blessed is the Man that heareth me, watch-*
g daily at my Gates, waiting at the Posts of my
doors; for who so findeth me findeth Life, and shall
tain favour of the Lord. Prov. 8. 34, 35.

As to those that think themselves too wise to
ed our Instruction, and too good to want our
monitions and Reproofs, and upon that Pre-
nce forsake our Assemblies, all I shall observe
that the wisest of Men does then give us a
ong Character of 'em, when he says, *That*
Ear of the Wise seeketh Knowledge. Prov. 18.
But if the mistake is of their side, as is most
ely, and, as I have before proved, then we
must

must think that *Solomon* does them no wrong when he bestows those two severe Proverbs upon them, *he that hateth reproof is brutish*, Pro 12. 1. *And seest thou a Man wise in his own Conceit, there is more hope of a Fool than of him.* Pro 26. 12. This quite turns the Tables, when Wise Men, as they would pass for, they are made worse than *Fools*, and next to *Brutes*. And indeed, it is but Charity to think so; for if they are really so Wise as they pretend to be, they are so much the worse Men, and have so much the more to answer for.

The other Branch of the improvement below (my Reverend Brethren) to you and me: And it instructs us, in the 1st Place, to be industrious in furnishing our own Minds with all that useful knowledge which we are required to communicate to our Hearers, that so we may approve ourselves *Workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth*: And, that there may be no Ground, no, nor Colour for such a pretence, for not hearing of us, which, if it were true, we should have indeed great Reason to be ashamed.

It teaches us in the next place not to be fond of Novelties, and fine Things, to please curious and itching Ears, but after the Example of the Apostle in the Text, to feed our Flocks with wholesome and solid Truths, and to inculcate the same; to *mind* and *remind* them of the things which they *know*, till they take Root in their Hearts, and bring forth some Fruit in their Lives. Were Truths printed upon Mens Brains as in a Book, or Stamp'd, as with a Seal, so that the Impressions would continue, there would

less occasion for doing this: But since Memory consists only in a Power of recalling and bringing those Ideas which have formerly been in our Minds; which Power, as it is strengthen'd by use, so is it diminish'd, and often quite lost, with respect to particular Ideas, by disuse: I say, since 'tis thus, there is a Necessity that we should inculcate and often revive those useful truths which ought to be uppermost in Mens Minds; or otherwise they will be apt to Evaporate, and *vanish away, like the Morning Cloud, and early Dew.*

Further, it teaches us not to think too well of ourselves and too meanly of others, because we are the Instruments which God uses to instruct them and make them wiser: Since as we have now heard, it is chiefly owing to the Grace of God accompanying our Labours, that they have any success. We may indeed take the Comfort and Satisfaction of doing good, home to ourselves, but the Credit and Glory must be all ascribed to God; after the Example of St. Paul, who owns that his *sufficiency for his ministerial Office, was of God*, and 2 Cor. 9. 5. that the Good which he did was not owing to himself, but to the *Grace of God which was by him*; That *neither he who Planted*, 1 Cor. 15. 10. *nor Apollos who Watered, were any thing*, 1 Cor. 3. 6. 7. *it was God that gave the Increase.* We have indeed a Treasure committed to us, as we are told that it is in *Earthen Vessels*, to justify our Pride, and to shew that the *Excellency of Power is of God, and not of us*. We shoot the Arrow, but it 2 Cor. 4. 7. *often at Random*; and it is God that directs it,

it, and makes it do execution. The most that we can do, is, with the Husband-man, to sow the Seed ; for, like him, we must depend upon the Influence of Heaven to make it fruitful.

Lastly, It teaches us to be assiduous and unwearied in the discharge of our Ministerial Function, after the Example of St. Peter in the Text, and by Virtue of the Motive that follows ; *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these Things, though I know them, and be establish'd in the present Truth. Yea, I think it meet, so long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance, knowing that shortly I must put off this my Tabernacle.* And St. Paul urges the same Motive upon Timothy ; with which I will conclude : *Charge thee therefore, says he, before God and Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and Dead, at his Appearance and his Kingdom, to Preach the Word, be instant in Season and out of Season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all Long-suffering and Doctrine,* 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. Grant us Grace so to feed the Flock of God, which is among us, and to be Ensamples to the same. *That when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we may receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.* To him, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Glory, Honour and Dominion, World without end. *Amen.*



F I N I S.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish-Church of Wendover, in the County of Bucks, on the 31st of December. 1706. The Day of Thanksgiving for the Wonderful Successes of this Year. By Josiah Wharton, Vicar of Wendover, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Duke of Wharton. Price 3d.

